

## PRESS RELEASE

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### Global scientific community meets in Europe to look at new and improved ways to tackle infectious diseases

**10 April 2010 VIENNA:** Europe's largest conference on infectious diseases opens today in Vienna with more than 8,000 experts gathering to share latest knowledge and practice to improve the fight against infectious diseases in Europe and around the world.

"Every year the European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ECCMID) pools together global knowledge and experience to better understand the challenges we face in infectious disease and explore the range of responses available to the medical and scientific community," said Professor Wolfgang Graninger, President of the Congress.

The 20<sup>th</sup> annual ECCMID will have a special emphasis on H1N1 and emerging/re-emerging infectious diseases, the enduring antibiotic crisis and the problems of hospital infection control.

"At ECCMID the very latest scientific achievements and findings in diagnostics and treatment of infectious diseases will take centre stage – from how social networking media can act as a channel for gathering and sharing information, to identifying best practice in infection control and new treatment options," said Professor Javier Garau, President of the European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID) who are the organizers of ECCMID.

The issue of infection control in hospitals will be highlighted at ECCMID including a new study carried out in 13 European countries showing that rates of good hand hygiene compliance and practice are highly variable, ranging from 7 percent to 88 percent. The study, which looked at staff in intensive care units, shows that on average, nurses scored the best, while doctors trailed auxiliary nurses and other healthcare workers in their compliance ratings. However, the study also shows that rates of good hand hygiene practice can rise after the introduction of awareness and compliance programmes.

Meanwhile, new data on MRSA (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*) being released at ECCMID highlights a major shift to the community-acquired form of the disease in the US, away from hospital-acquired infections. A 10 year study shows that the rate of community-acquired infection tripled – a phenomenon that has affected all age groups, patient settings and geographic regions.

Antibiotic resistance is also of concern to scientists at ECCMID as a new European-wide study shows that resistance to three classes of antibiotics used to treat invasive infections including pneumonia and septicaemia has increased significantly over the past four years in multiple countries. Giuseppe Cornaglia, ESCMID Past President said; "We have to remain vigilant in our efforts to address effective antimicrobial therapy which in Europe is fast losing ground to some serious bacterial infections. Studies do show that combined resistance to commonly used antibiotics is threatening community and hospital-based care throughout the continent."

Vienna, Austria  
10–13 April 2010

EUROPEAN CONGRESS OF  
CLINICAL MICROBIOLOGY  
AND INFECTIOUS DISEASES

20th **ECCMID**

New findings being released during ECCMID also show how social media and cutting edge electronic recordkeeping systems have the potential to act as early warning systems for disease outbreaks, as well as outlets for public health information. Researchers in the UK have investigated how Twitter and other social networking sites were used during the H1N1 outbreak, finding more than 1 million tweets describing flu-related illnesses and symptoms over a four month period. The study highlights the potential of user-generated content from social networking sites to provide information such as affected individual's location and activities. The use of an "e-register" to help hospitals gather critical information about infections has also shown promise helping to improve the exchange of critical information between microbiologists and clinical teams.

During the Congress world leading virologist Professor Albert Osterhaus, will receive the ESCMID Excellence Award. "A year after the outbreak of H1N1, ECCMID provides an important arena to present and discuss the latest findings, analysis and data," said Osterhaus. He also stressed; "There is never room for complacency when dealing with pandemic influenza and the scientific and public health communities must be mindful to prepare for the worst, but hope for the best."

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**Media Contact:**

Claire Hoffman at [claire.hoffman@bartley-robbs.co.uk](mailto:claire.hoffman@bartley-robbs.co.uk) Tel: +44 7977 440 353

Cathy Bartley at [cathy.bartley@bartley-robbs.co.uk](mailto:cathy.bartley@bartley-robbs.co.uk) Tel: +44 7958 561 671

ESCMID is a non-profit organization whose mission is to improve the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of infection-related diseases. This is achieved by promoting and supporting research, education, training, and good medical practice.  
**[www.escmid.org](http://www.escmid.org)**

Europeans still suffer and die from infectious diseases;

- Every year approximately 4 million people catch healthcare-associated infections causing 37,000 deaths. 20–30% of infections are considered to be preventable by intensive hygiene and control programmes such as hand washing.<sup>i</sup>
- An estimated one third of the world's population is infected by tuberculosis (TB) with some 9 million new TB cases annually. In the Europe Region there are an estimated 49 new TB cases and 7 deaths every hour<sup>ii</sup>
- 25 to 50 million people catch seasonal influenza annually in the EU, with 40,000 to 200,000 deaths<sup>iii</sup>
- An estimated 2.3 million people are living with HIV in Europe<sup>iv</sup>. Eastern Europe has seen a steady increase in HIV infections since 2000 due to an increase in heterosexually acquired infections and infections among injecting drug users.

<sup>i</sup> European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC)

<sup>ii</sup> WHO Regional Office for Europe

<sup>iii</sup> ECDC

<sup>iv</sup> UNAIDS